



March 10, 2022

Chairs Sen. Lopes, Rep. Williams; Ranking Members Sen. Cicarella, Rep. Polletta

Operation Fuel Testimony in Support

RB 292 AAC Heating Efficiency in New Residential Construction and Major Alterations of Residential Buildings. Bill language: <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2022/TOB/S/PDF/2022SB-00292-R00-SB.PDF>

Operation Fuel ensures equitable access to energy for all by providing year-round energy and utility assistance, promoting energy independence, and advocating for affordable energy. We partner with local government and community-based organizations throughout Connecticut to ensure that families and individuals in need have access to year-round utility and water assistance. We started in the late 1970s as the nation's first fuel bank, helping struggling families pay for heat. Today our programs have grown to include electricity and water bill assistance, as well as homelessness intervention. We encourage CT residents struggling to pay utility bills to visit our online portal at www.operationfuel.org/gethelp, where you can apply 24/7.

Operation Fuel believes that energy efficiency is an essential component of CT's strategy to reduce emissions and air pollution, by limiting demand that leads to spillage and higher prices for consumers. On October 6, 2021, we hosted an online event for Energy Efficiency Day, with over 130 people tuning in to learn more about energy and water conservation. While there will always be a need for assistance, drawing down demand is also important in reducing energy costs for CT residents. Consumers can only achieve so much savings at the household level by forgoing light at certain times of day or unplugging each of their outlets. We must make systemic investments to reduce our energy demand, which leads to higher pollution and costs. Additionally, we must ensure that the sacrifices, costs, and penalties of the clean energy transition are not assigned to those who can least afford, and are least responsible, for our dependence on fossil fuels. Fossil fuel combustion in residential buildings is linked to increased asthma exposure. Electrification inside the home leads to better air quality. As we continue expanding weatherization services throughout the state, we must also ensure that we are removing air pollutants instead of trapping them inside. In addition to environment and cost benefits, building new housing with efficient electric heating will help improved public health outcomes.

Operation Fuel supports that this bill endorses CT's accelerated deployment of heat pumps. Heat pumps vastly improve indoor air quality. Compared to fossil-fuel appliances, heat pumps are 300% more efficient; because they move heat, instead of making it. Air and ground

source heat pump technology has evolved quickly in recent years, and their use is becoming more popular throughout New England. Maine, under the leadership of Governor Janet Mills, is on track to reach the goal of 100,000 heat pumps deployed statewide by 2025. This very month, tens of thousands of households in Maine have made it through the winter using only heat pumps to stay warm. Particularly in new residential construction, and potentially paired with shared solar and battery storage that are rapidly becoming available in CT, heat pumps can greatly reduce home energy use.

In conclusion, Operation Fuel appreciates the committee's increasing focus on energy efficiency and air quality in our state's residential buildings, and we ask you to support RB 292.

Thank you for your consideration.

Brenda Watson, Executive Director, Operation Fuel.